

Davina's Costumer's Notes

Special Edition - Fall 2013

**Behind the
Seams:
The Making of
The Cloth
of Egypt**

**Shopping
For Vintage
Assiut**

Scraptastic
Making Costume
Accessories
With Assiut

*Nicole
Simone*



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Davina's Costumer's Notes

Special Edition - Fall 2013

The Making Of: *The Cloth of Egypt*

The Making Of

- 8 - The Making of: Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut
- 18 - Tribute: Professional Dancers
- 30 - Kickstarter
- 32 - Good Reads

Costume Designers

- 35 - Poppy Maya
- 40 - redvelvet
- 44 - Misia Rockte

Cover Model

- 50 - Nicole Simone

Photographers

- 56 - Alisha Westerfeld aka Zemira
- 60 - Laura Thompson aka *Setareh*
- 64 - Michael Baxter

Buying and Using Assiut Cloth

- 70 - Animals and Assiut
- 71 - Five Essential Shopping Tips for Buying Vintage Assiut
- 72 - Shopping on Etsy
- 74 - Tie-on Headband
- 75 - SCRAPTASTIC
- 76 - Dressing the Part

Collections

- 80 - Lacis
- 81 - Vintage Assiut in Private Collections
- 82 - Ojala Collection
- 84 - Sindaiya Collection
- 86 - Gaditana Collection

More Dancers

- 88 - Lunatic Fringe Dance Ensemble
- 90- Bastet Orientale
- 94 - Nour El Ain

Behind the Scenes

- 100 - Waldo
- 102 - The Big Kahuna
- 104 - Laughing
- 106 - Color Pop



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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the very first “magazine” edition of Costumer’s Notes! I’ve always fantasized about producing a magazine, and today my dreams are coming true! But why a magazine? Why now? I should be working on my upcoming book?!?

The answer is YES! I AM working on The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut. And in that process I realized that I had an abundance of information and photographs, too much for one book, two much for THREE books!

So I decided to put together this tribute to the women and men who have helped me make my upcoming book a reality. Most of the images are the “B-sides” - really good, but won’t make airplay in the book. The articles are built from material that might seem to quickly out of date, so instead of ditching the work, we’ve tucked it here.

And last - this IS a tribute! I’m so grateful to each and every person who took a photo, made a costume, modeled and performed. Many of these people donated their time or traded me for the lovely costumes that they appear in.

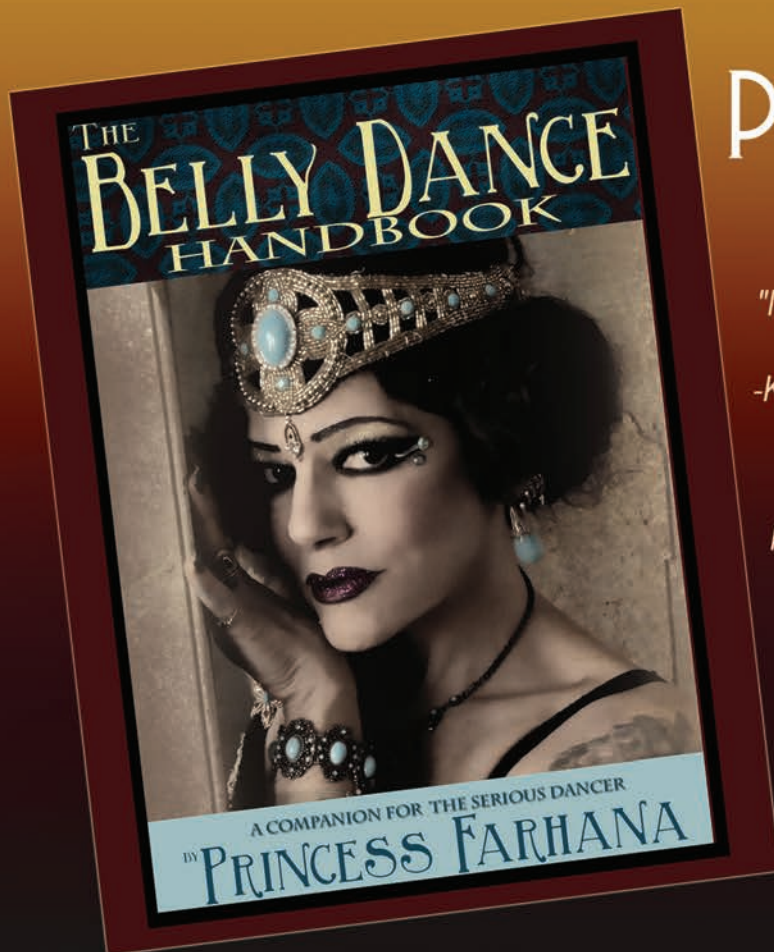
Thank you for stopping by to take a peek and enjoy this phase of my journey with assiut,

Dawn Devine ~ Davina
Nov. 2013

THE BELLY DANCE HANDBOOK

BY

PRINCESS FARHANA



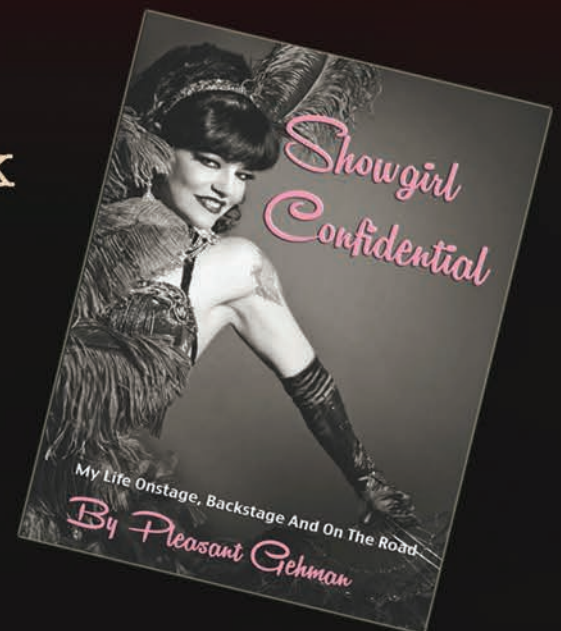
*"No matter what style of belly dance you do,
you need this book in your arsenal."
-Kajira Djoumahna, author of The Tribal Bible*

*"...Everything you need to
know about becoming a professional dancer...
or a consummately polished performer."*

*-Marta Schill, author of
The Compleat Belly Dancer*

The Belly Dance Handbook
&
Showgirl Confidential
(short stories)

Available NOW
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**New Book
Coming
Early
2014**



TEACHING BELLY DANCE

By Sara Shrapnell

Teaching Belly Dance is the book about setting up, planning, teaching and enjoying belly dance classes. This guide is designed to help you become a more effective and profitable teacher. Included is invaluable advice to help you:

- Set up your belly dance classes
- Promote yourself as a teacher
- Plan interesting semesters and lessons
- Understand your student aims
- Provide useful critique
- Teach to a variety of learning styles
- Organize your own events

About the Author:

Sara Shrapnell has taught thousands of belly dance classes, both in the UK and US, during the last ten years. She brings her experiences and knowledge together into the only book you will need to teach classes.

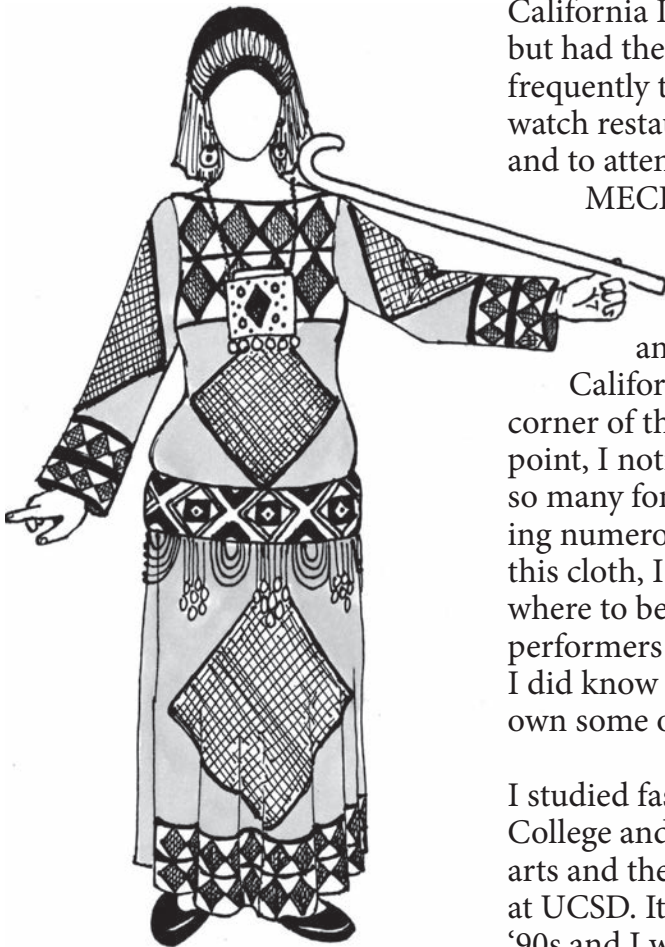
www.TeachingBellyDance.com
www.LetsBellyDanceUSA.com



The Making of:

Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut

Ever wonder what makes one author tick? What is the road many authors take from initial concept to finished work? Here are some of the stages I went through during the making of the book *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut*.



I wrote about assiut in my booklet "Style File" and at that time, I had yet to adopt a single uniform spelling of assiut for this cloth.

This project began a long time ago. When I was a new belly dancer and freshly arrived in California I lived in San Diego, but had the opportunity to travel frequently to Los Angeles, to watch restaurant performances and to attend the venerable MECDA show called "Cairo Carnival." At these shows, I had the opportunity to see amazing acts from across California, far beyond my corner of the country. At some point, I noticed assiut. But I have so many fond memories of watching numerous dancers wearing this cloth, I wouldn't even know where to begin making a list of performers who inspired me, but I did know that I really wanted to own some of this magical cloth.

I studied fashion design at Sierra College and then studied visual arts and theatrical costume design at UCSD. It was the first half of '90s and I was working at the La Jolla playhouse as a costume maker, belly dancing at local Greek restaurants, and writing dozens of art history papers. At UCSD, my three worlds came together in an intersection that changed the

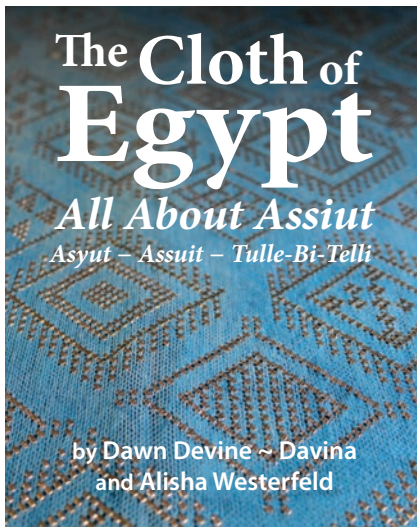
course of my life. I began writing about how to make belly dance costumes. My first book, *Costuming from the Hip*, started out as a series of informational handouts for my students, fellow dance enthusiasts, and members of the budding UCSD belly dance club.

I went to graduate school at UC Davis outside of Sacramento and it was in 1997 when I realized that there was no serious research conducted on the origin and history of assiut cloth. I found lots of one-paragraph blurbs that recounted the same few "facts."

- Assiut was popular in the 1920s.
- Assiut was invented in the Upper Egyptian town of Assiut.
- Assiut was made by blind Coptic women.
- Assiut dates back to the Ancient Egyptians.

But there were no concrete facts, just unsupported lore that gained credibility with the weight of time.

So I began my research in earnest. I purchased my first vintage piece of assiut to serve as a talisman, and then the hunt for informa-



tion was on. It soon became clear that a big stumbling block for historical research was the myriad spellings and names for this cloth. With a substantial list of words for this fabric, I began a systematic hunt for references.

In 2010, when I was working on a book about Berber costuming, I planned on devoting a chapter to the history of assiut fabric, because I loved the cloth and many Berber people lived in Upper Egypt through the 19th century. However, imagine my surprise when my research turned up a radical fact - assiut cloth didn't appear in the historic record until after 1890! By that time, most of the Berber peoples had left Egypt.

So, with fresh, highly unique, and unpublished information in my hand, I decided to change directions and take that "chapter" on assiut cloth and expand it into its own book, *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut*. We are now in the layout phase of book production, selecting photographs and editing the text.

This magazine is dedicated to the women and men who have par-

ticipated in the production phase of *The Cloth of Egypt*. Dozens of models and dancers and more than a handful of talented photographers have contributed their hard work to this project. Thank you all for helping me make my dream come true. There are too many wonderful photographs and historic images to put into one single book, so we've put together this magazine as a tribute to the hard work and dedication of this team.

However, I do want to send out a special thanks to my assistant, art designer, and one of my favorite models Nicole Simone for her help in producing this publication. And to Alisha Westerfeld who has taken no less than 40,000 photos for the assiut project - I couldn't have done this without you!

As you read this magazine, I hope you get a sense of what a massive collaboration the *Cloth of Egypt* has been. I'm still a few weeks away from *The Cloth of Egypt* being published, but, keep an eye out for it. In the meantime, enjoy this special issue of *Costumer's Notes*!



Making Of: Research

The Big Idea

The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut, started when I discovered a hole in the historic record about assiut. When did it start? Where did it come from? I simply couldn't find any information about the origins and history of assiut cloth. So I made it my mission to find it. At that time I had seen more than a few post cards and photographs of stars and celebrities, tourist images, propaganda as ephemera, and photos in books dating from 1900 to about 1940. If those images existed, then there had to be some written record of how this fabric was acquired. So I defined my research mission: Find the moment when assiut cloth entered the historical record.

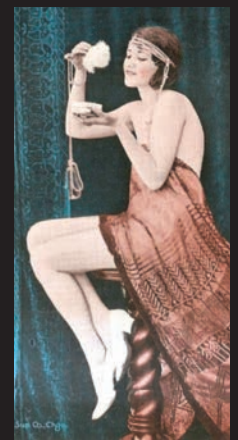
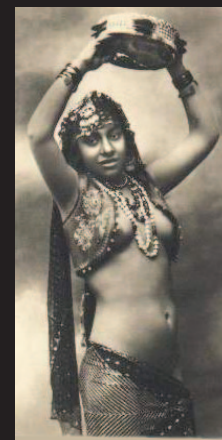
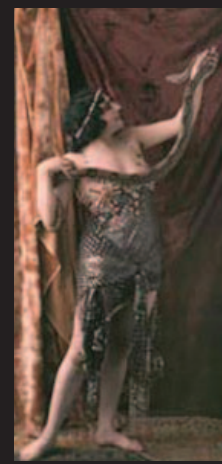
What is in a Name?

The first step in my research process was to set up some search parameters. I built a list of spellings for the word assiut. I decided to use the US standard spelling for the name of the city of origin. In England, the preferred spelling is Asyut. While there are several standardized spellings in modern dictionaries, back at the turn of the 20th century, spellings were much more flexible for words transliterated from Arabic into English. Once I had a fairly complete list of alternative spellings, I was able to dive into the historical archive.

Who's that Girl?

Over many years, I've amassed quite an extensive collection of early 20th century images of women wearing assiut. My next goal was to identify as many of these ladies as possible. Knowing who these women were would allow me to explore their biographies to try and date when their assiut may have entered their life. For instance, below is the renowned English actress Lily Elsie, who wore this assiut-clad costume for her role of Sonia in the play "The Merry Widow" in 1907.





Above is a small fraction of the public domain and out of print pictures that have informed my research. For the past decade, I've explored vintage image sources from travel documentation to arcade and post cards, from familiar celebrity photos to unknown dancers wearing assiut. These images originate from the 1890's through the 1940's and each image has inspired me to delve ever deeper into the archive looking for the critical moment when assiut cloth enters the historical record.

Top Row: 1920's map of Egypt, origin unknown; Illustration from London Illustrated News; Unknown snake woman, Arcade Card; Egyptian tambourine girl, post card; Middle Row: Tourists at Assiut, source unknown; Tambourine Girl, Post Card; Arcade Card by ESCO. Bottom Row, Dancer Pauline Starke, post card; SS Sudan, post card.

Making Of: Design & Construction

Designing the Costumes

Once I had the research nailed and my writing underway, I began contemplating the notion of how I was going to illustrate this book. Most of my previous publications focused on how to make patterns, design, and build costumes. My goal for *Cloth of Egypt* was to feature a mix of styles that include ensembles that were high glamour, dark drama, tribal, and folkloric linked by the use of this amazing fabric. I started doing preliminary illustrations of the costumes I would feature, and it took me about three weeks to realize that effectively drawing assiat was practically impossible. Example costumes needed to be made and photographed!

Friends to the Rescue

My dance friends throughout the San Francisco Bay Area community stepped up to the plate when I asked them if they would take on the roles of dancer and model. I was so pleased that my friends, including some dance pros, some talented amateurs, and belly dance enthusiasts donated their time and energy to my project. I figured it would take about six months to make six bedlah sets in addition to altering a handful of assiat robes. I began work on the costumes and quickly realized that I needed more than six examples.

Diversity is Key

As the project progressed, I realized that I wanted to showcase the broad diversity of performers involved in the dance world. While I couldn't make a costume for every single one of my friends, I did try to get the widest range of models possible. I was lucky to have models at all talent levels, but then I realized that I had looks on dancers from six different decades! From my young niece to some of my favorite dance masters, I was lucky enough to have dancers of every age, every skill, multiple body shapes, and dance styles.

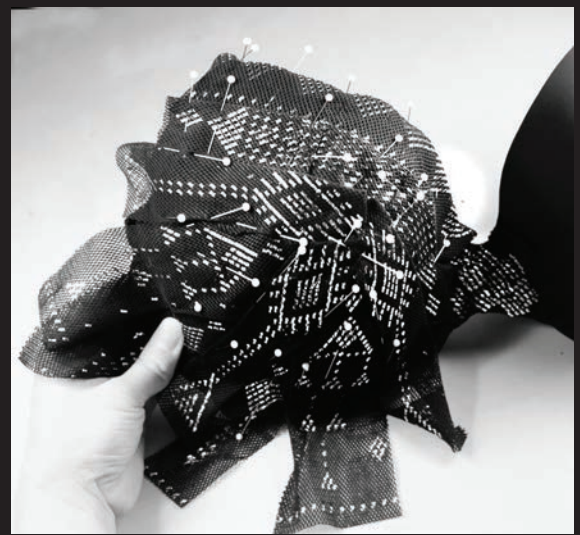
Costume Planning Sheet

Dancer: _____	Costume Title: _____
Date Started: _____	
Due Date: _____	
First Fitting _____	
Second Fitting _____	
Materials Needed:	


Embellishments:	


Sewing Log:	


Notes:	





What Have I Already Got?

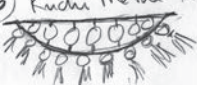
- 


Awsome Haram Pants with Assint Side Pouch (Design by Amara of Tombo Studio)
- 

Assint Skard @ Canals & Snow Flakes (thru to Kathi Richards for this Pouch)
- 

Assint Skard with Palm Tree Motif (I've Already Made 2 Bra/Belt Sets from the Rest)
- 

4 - Old Black Bra - X Bra from Fredericks with a little life left in it!
Fredericks of Hollywood X
- 

5 Black Mesh-tummy Unitard
My tummy is not ready for Prime time Any More - (Flat the legs of?)
Dahlah Futi
- 

6 Kuchi Metal Belt
- 

7 Pale of Necklaces to Harvest
If I need A Century Medallion I will cut something Apart -
+3 Days time



Making of: Photography

Collaboration is the name of the game! I worked with dozens of models; a very talented group of dancers and friends who were willing to trade their time for costume pieces, copies of the finished product, some modicum of glory, and my gratitude! I also want to thank each of the photographers who worked with me to make these photos look their best. In addition, there were hair stylists, makeup artists, friends, and supporters who cheered us on as we worked! Thank you all!







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Davina

Professional Dancers

One of the great joys of working on an epic collaborative project was the outpouring of support from my friends in the professional dance world. These ladies were brave enough to let me go wild and design and construct a unique custom crafted assiut costume. A few opened their collections of vintage costumes for photography. It's a brave and risky proposition to say "Do what ever you like!" to a designer but I think everyone is happy with the results.

Each of the dancers in this next section is a professional in the belly dance industry. They perform, teach weekly classes, private lessons, and workshops around the globe. Be sure to visit their websites for more information about each of these beauties.

The Cloth of Egypt

All About Assiut

Asyut – Assuit – Tulle-Bi-Telli

by Dawn Devine ~ Davina
and Alisha Westerfeld



Princess Farhana
princessfarhana.com



Kae Montgomery
kaetribalbellydance.com



Adriana
adrianabellydance.com



* Setareh *
setarehdancer.com

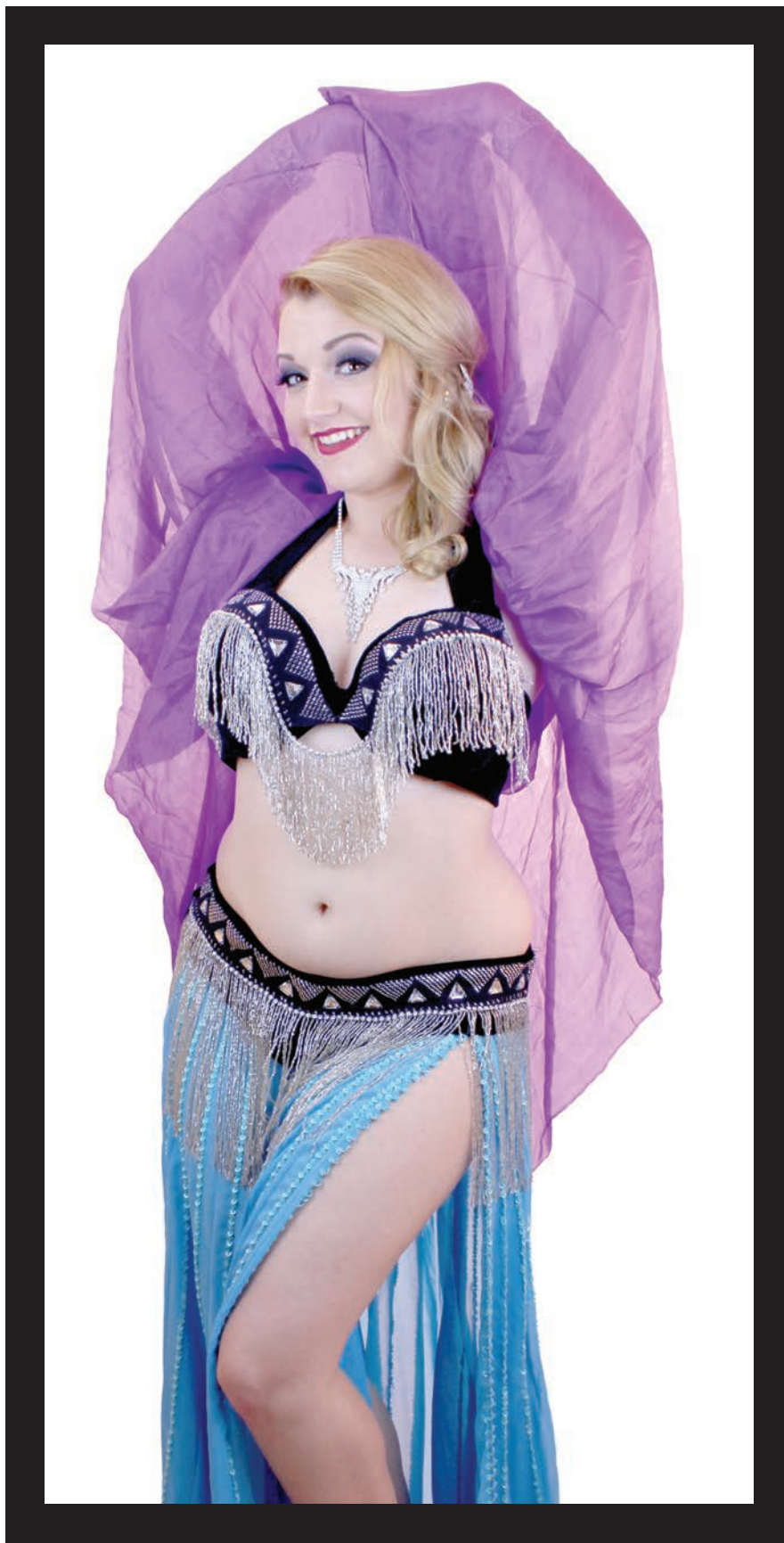


Malia
bellydancer.net



Celena

celena4dance.com



Poppy Maya
poppymaya.co.uk



Sara
letsbellydanceusa.com



Basinah
basinahdances.com

Poppy Maya

Belly dancer • Costume Designer • Teacher

Poppy is a bellydance costume designer specializing in assiut. She is based in the San Fransisco Bay Area and has designed costumes for dancers in the Uk, India and along the West Coast of the US.

Creating one of a kind costumes, Poppy can pull together your ideas, to produce something uniquely yours.

She is available for custom or redesign work in person, or can work with you remotely to create your costume design.

PoppyMaya@Hotmail.Co.Uk
www.PoppyMaya.Co.Uk



The Cloth of Egypt

All About Assiut

Asyut – Assuit – Tulle-Bi-Telli

by Dawn Devine ~ Davina
and Alisha Westerfeld

The definitive book on the history,
legend, use, and care of antique,
vintage and modern assiut cloth.

**Available January 2014
on Amazon.com**

Kickstarter

In June of 2013, I launched a Kickstarter to help fund the production of my new book, *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut*. My mission was to raise enough funds to help me upgrade my technology and buy materials and supplies. My modest goal of \$800 was quickly exceeded in a swoosh, and I was pleased to have reached a whopping \$7,060! This financial support has allowed me to do some amazing and unexpected things.

First - I was so happy to make those technical upgrades, and am now typing away on a recycled laptop (courtesy of Barry Brown) with the software that I needed to facilitate book layout and image editing. This magazine, like the upcoming book, was crafted using Photoshop and InDesign, along with text typed-up in Pages.

Second - I invested in purchasing the rights to reproduce

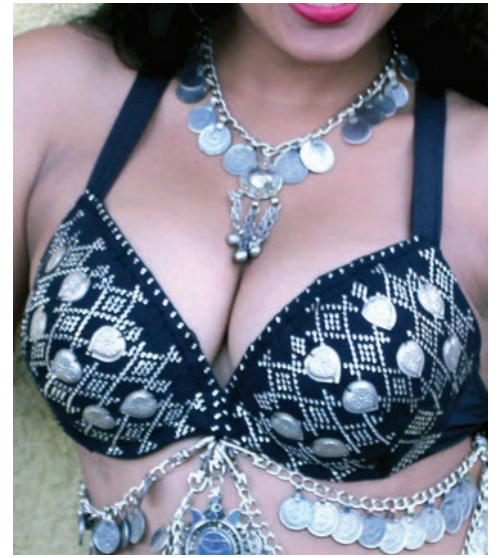
some pretty spectacular vintage photographs. Check out the image on the back of the magazine to see an amazing photo taken in 1915 by George Herbert, Fifth Earl of Carnarvon. We also got some amazing etchings, a map and original travel and theatrical post cards. This is going to make chapter one more interesting and beautiful than I could have hoped.

Third - The additional funds allowed me to purchase materials and supplies that were previously out of my reach. This includes the special needles and wire used to make assiut cloth. I also got ahold of a beautiful piece of densely patterned assiut for the \$200+ investors who each are getting a custom crafted bra from it that will appear in the book. I used these funds to purchase materials, findings and embellishments to make these some of the most beautiful and luxurious cos-

tume pieces I've ever had the privilege to design and make.

Although getting the Kickstart sponsor projects finished has slowed down my book production by a few weeks, I'm pleased to be nearly finished. When you get your copy of *Cloth of Egypt*, look for the special Kickstarter backer dedication page for more details.



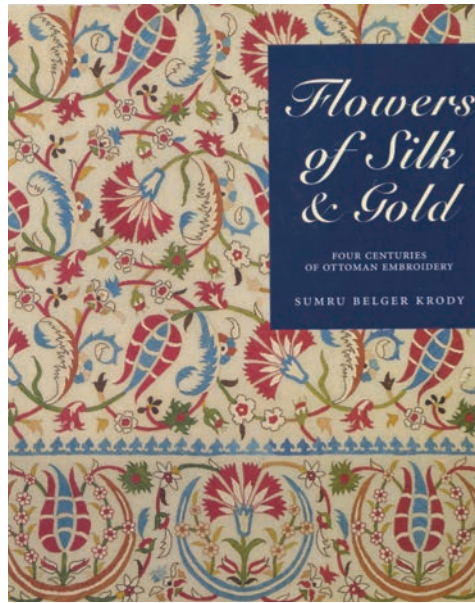
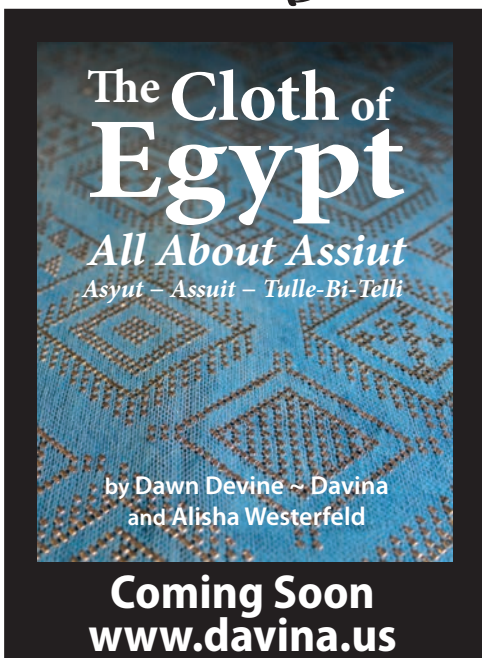


**Bras designed by Dawn Devine ~ Davina
for *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut***

Good Reads

I've read hundreds and looked at thousands of books during the course of my research for my book *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut*. All of this reading has created a working bibliography more than 15 pages long before formatting! While there currently are no other books devoted specifically to the subject of assuit, there are lots of fantastic resources devoted to Egyptian culture, history of needlework, and travelogues. Here are a few of my absolute favorites for you to consider for your next good read.

Davina



Flowers of Silk and Gold by Belger Krody

This lavishly illustrated coffee-table style book offers a visually stunning survey of over 400 years of Ottoman embroidery history. Most of the visual examples are courtesy of the Textile Museum in Washington DC, and these pieces showcase how Ottoman taste and technique spread throughout the countries they controlled and beyond.



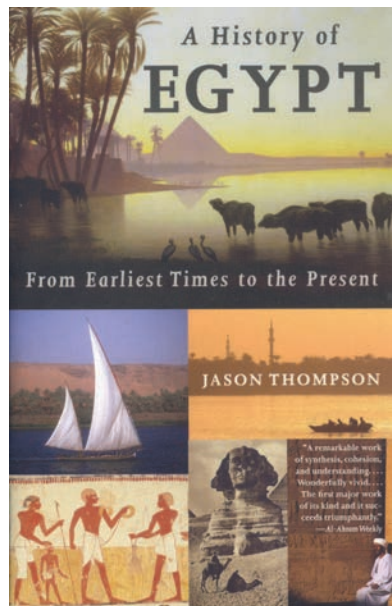
Edith Head by Jay Jorgensen

With a career that spanned over 50 years, Edith Head won the most awards of any costume designer in Hollywood. She designed costumes for thousands of stars, and during her expansive career, she wrote books, magazine articles, and even opened her own couture studio. Of particular note is the amazing assiut dress she designed for the movie *Sampson and Delilah*, which appears in this book.



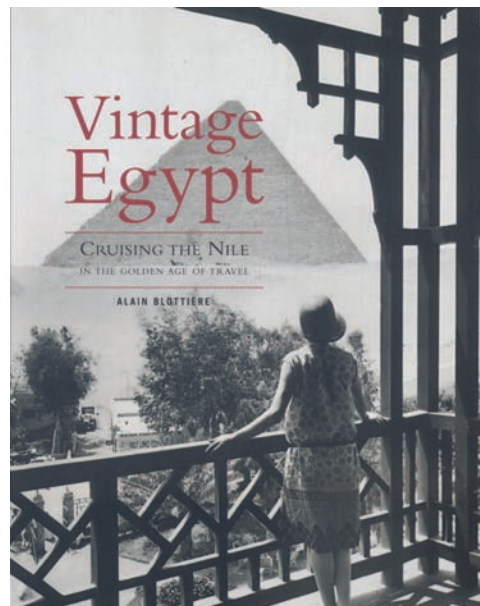
The Shining Cloth by Victoria Rivers

Be prepared to be inspired with this kaleidoscopic collection of exquisite photographs of embellished textiles. This expansive title explores the globe on an international hunt for the myriad ways that humanity has decorated cloth. From metal and beads to shells and beetle wings, if it shimmers or shines, it's included. There's even a lovely piece of assiut featured.



A History of Egypt: From Earliest Times to Present by Jason Thompson

Designed to provide travellers with an overview of Egyptian history, this book is well researched, yet written in an accessible voice. There is an excellent level of balance between history and analysis, between breadth and depth. Includes an excellent reading list, so it makes a great starting point for further research, making it a fantastic resource for armchair historians.



Vintage Egypt: Cruising the Nile in the Golden Age of Travel by Alain Biotiere

Take a step back in time to an era when Egypt was the world's number one destination for tourist exploration. Filled with gorgeous images from the 20's and 30's, this book depicts the Egypt of steam ships and traditional sailing dahabiaya, hotels and markets, nightclubs and historic monuments. You get a good sense of the atmosphere during the heyday of purchasing assiut shawls.

Katrina Curry Makeup Artist

takes the stage in a draped
halter top designed and
constructed by Poppy
Maya. Photo by Alisha
Westerfeld



Poppy Maya

Belly Dancer & Costume Designer

Q - When did you make your first costume piece?

A - I made my first costume piece when I was a baby dancer, around 11 or 12. A friend of ours had brought back some cheap costumes from her vacation and I received one as a gift. It was a blue and gold bra and belt set, but I remember looking at my young body which hadn't quite filled out in all the right places yet, thinking I didn't feel comfortable going on stage like that. I also felt that it was a very "grown up" style costume, I didn't want to pretend to be something I wasn't - like a three year old in her mothers heels.

After a lot of thought, my mum, Sara, helped me pick a design and drove me to the fabric store. Little did she know she was creating a monster! She would never have a living room free of glitter again!

We picked two blue shades of organza, and cut them into petals that were the length of my torso. I stitched them one by one onto a triangle style string-tie bikini which I wore underneath the bellydance bra. This meant my tummy was covered all the way round, and with a long circle skirt on, I felt ready to go out to the stage for my first big solo - which was naturally Tarkan "Kiss Kiss" mwah!

Q - When did you make your first head-to-toe look? When did you go pro?

A - I was performing in restaurants when I was 17 and still in full time education. I wasn't in the position to buy several \$500 costumes to perform shows in. I was inspired by some talented costume designers in my home town in





England, who shared with me some of their skills and gave me the confidence to start working on my own pieces. From there I started turning my doodles into bellydance costumes. I was always very flattered when people complimented my costumes, but I had never considered going pro until I had dancers trying to buy my designs off my back! It was at that point I started making custom-order pieces for other dancers, as well as myself.

Q - What are five adjectives you would use to describe your design style? If you had to pick one of the five, which is most important?

A - How can anyone pick just FIVE adjectives?

Glitter, glitter, sparkle, glitter, glitter....

But seriously I think these four terms are the ones I strive to achieve in every ensemble.

Comfortable - Secure to wear

Precious - something which creates joy and will be treasured

Adorned - my style is heavily accessorized

Versatile - can fit with the dancers existing wardrobe, and suits her needs

Q - What is your best piece of advice for dancers who want to improve their wardrobe?

A - My best piece of advice would be consider your body. We can fall under the magic spell of a piece, rather than look at it objectively to see if it is really a good fit in our dance ensembles.

I'm not sure why dancers treat a dance wardrobe differently than an everyday wardrobe. We still need to pick colors/ shapes/ styles that fit our bodies. There are millions of articles in main stream fashion magazine or in blogs, and as dancers we just need to take that advice and see how it applies to bellydance. For example, there are

lots of guides on the Internet to help you identify your body shape. Are you a pear shape, hourglass, or inverted triangle? These guides will then recommend clothes to consider or avoid. If the guide says your body shape should avoid ruffled tops, then bellydance bras with ruffles (or tassels, or any other excessive gathering of fabric) may not be the right choice for you. Also good fit never goes out of style.

Q - Who is your favorite belly dance designer? If you don't have a favorite, why?

A - I don't think I have a favorite. So many people are creating wonderful pieces it would be hard





Sadira

to narrow it down. Not only are there beautiful bellydance costumes out there, but I love all the bellydance accessories, items which are not strictly a costume but would mostly appeal to Bellydancers, such as assuit tiny hats, hair accessories, bags, and dresses.

Q - If you could go anywhere in the world to buy fabric, where would you go? Why would you go there?

A - I couldn't possibly pick one place! Buying fabric is such a multi sensory experience, and that experience is going to change drastically depending on your location in the world. Not only are there the many colors of fabrics, so many different textures to touch and caress as you wander around the markets. And of course, where there is a market, you have market sellers, which adds to the noise and hubbub. "Best price - feel the quality"

I have purchased fabric for costumes in London(UK), Bangalore, Panaji (India), San Fransisco, and Los Angeles (USA). But anywhere I travel, I find small local stores and pick up a few pieces to incorporate into my designs. Most recently, I was lucky enough to visit the Big Island of Hawaii, and I

dragged my family around the market. I picked up some beautiful shells from a small, family-owned bead store which will be featured on some upcoming projects.

Q - How would you describe the costuming side of your business? Who is your customer? What does she want to buy?

A - My client comes to me because she hasn't found what she is looking for "off the shelf", mostly because she cannot find something that fits her well. She doesn't feel like the standard size of the costumes that are coming out of Egypt or Turkey, or perhaps she wants to create something a little more covered up in one area, or highlight their favorite asset (which might not be conventional). Some dancers want to buy costumes that are completely unique to them. When a dancer hires me, regardless of her style, she is paying for my experience, fitting skills, and my advice.

I love watching dancers perform in a piece I've worked on. But I think my favorite moment is when they put on their new costume, and then fall in love with themselves. I love that a costume makes them feel like a million dollars.





REDVELVET

DANCER, DESIGNER, & DJ



One of the key people who has been extremely important throughout the project, but especially, in finishing the book has been the lovely Christina Gold, aka redvelvet. She is a triple threat! She's a designer, a dancer, and a DJ. She brings to the world of belly dance a keen appreciation for music, lovely costumes and beautiful performances. I took a moment during a sewing session to ask her a few questions about her ongoing relationship with assiut.



Q - What was the first assiut costume you made?

A - My first costume piece was a simple panel skirt, and I still wear it over 10 years later. It's a classic, made from a black and silver assiut shawl. I co-designed it with local costume designer Laini and dancer Troupe Lazuli. The skirt is quite narrow, and we originally wore them with harem pants made of sari cloth. Of course, I've worn that skirt many times since!

Q - Thank you for letting us photograph your vintage assiut collection, which of your vintage pieces is your favorite?

A - I would have to say, my favorite vintage piece is a simple tunic made from a 1920's shawl. I originally purchased it from Trish St. John, owner of Liquid Silver Designs. She vended for many years at Rakkasah, and she really understood the petite frame. What I love about this tunic is that it's easy on and off, looks fantastic and fits in a tiny bag.

Q - What is the favorite project that you've worked on for Cloth of Egypt?

A - I really like my "Tuxedo Bra," because it looks so elegant and classy, and it's really versatile. I can dress it up cabaret, I can wear it under a robe for folkloric, or I can accessorize and make it all tribal fusion. I can even wear it out at night under a sheer blouse. It was a true collaboration between Dawn and I, and I love it!

Q - Who is your "Assiut Hero" in the world of dance?

A - In the world dance, I really like the look and style of Rachel Brice. Her collection of assiut is astonishing. Of course, I also really love Morgana's white assiut dress from the BBC TV show Merlin. Although that's not a dance outfit, it's very inspiring!





Redvelvet currently works on custom dress accessories and costume pieces for dancers throughout the greater Bay Area. She takes her collection of goodies to local markets and art festivals and is always happy to design the perfect piece for you.

red@redandgold.net



Redvelvet has become a collector of vintage pieces, and you can see her prized vintage piano shawl in this ensemble worn for her once-in-a-lifetime role as maid of honor in a family wedding.





Misia Rockte

Creative Entangler

Misia Rockte entered my world of assiat a year ago, when she came to show me her first assiat bra. I realized immediately that she is a talented and multifaceted artist, who works in numerous fine-art techniques, in fabric and textiles, and in hair. As a stylist, she specializes in historical braiding techniques.

Misia studied costume design with me intensively for nine months, and in that time, we worked on numerous projects together for my book and she's been instrumental in completing the Kickstarter premiums. She now works her costuming magic for lucky clients in the greater San Jose area.

creativeentangler.wordpress.com



Model Nicole Simone hair styled by Misia, photo by the artist.



Q - How did you discover Assiut?

A - A friend and retired antiques dealer gifted me an old dirty zip lock bag full of very fluid silver fabric scraps and said you will know what to do with this. I knew peering at that shiny stuff that it was something very old and special. My very first dance bra got covered with that same fabric from the bag. Then I started to try to find out what it was from people who saw the bra. This led me back to you (Davina). I wrote about that initial experience in my first blog posting: creativeentangler.wordpress.com

Q - How would you describe your design perspective?

A - I like to incorporate many facets into one garment. Does it have balance, comfort and a focal point of interest like a fine painting, strength and beauty? Will it suit the body? I love vintage and the idea of reuse. If we are talking about in-

spiration I'm influenced by so many things. Art and history, Assiut has them both. Tribal pieces, music, old Hollywood movies, Italian stuff, Art Nouveau, the dance itself, the human body, the color in that flower...

I like an ornate creation and the costumes must have balance. To me creating a one of a kind art piece, to be part of someone appreciating their own power as a dancer, to see them look at themselves in a new way, is so rewarding. About Assiut: Having a great appreciation for something that has a rich history, is beautiful, and seems to defy scientific laws, I do with it whatever it will let me.

I compete with myself so my design should have the flexibility to accommodate how to make it work, how to make it different, and how to make it interesting. That may have been a quiet mantra my whole life.





Q - What artist has most influenced your art-work and your costume design?

A - Can I have two, Leonardo Da vinci and Edith Head of Hollywood? Both were great observers of nature, the human body, and functionality.

Q - If you could pick just three belly dance heroes, who would they be?

A - Siobhan, Zoe Jakes, Rachel Brice
What draws me to these dancers is their versatility and what they have given to the belly dance community each with their own style, infectious innovators.



Siobhan - my first dance teacher. She took her belly dance from the restaurants and into a whole new venue, the SCA. She researched different tribal styles from different regions, the rest is history.

Zoe Jakes –Beautiful dancer that she is has many facets to her endeavors and accomplishments. She pushes the envelope of anything she is a part of including her love of myth and philosophy.

Rachel Brice – As Zoe puts it Ahh. Rachel is so graceful and inspiring. With her Studio Datura she brings people to dance and healing every day. I admire that.

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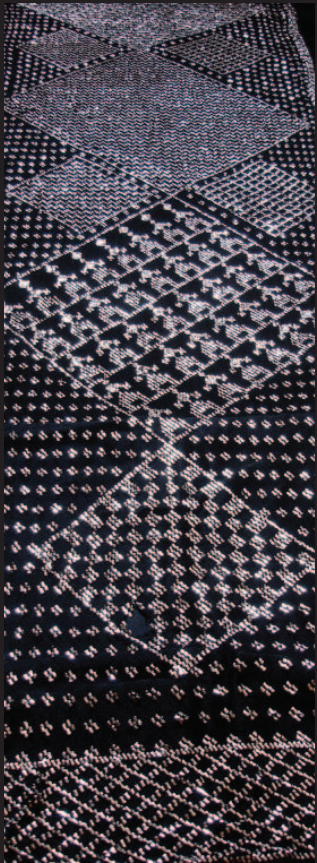
*Hilary Thacker is a professional
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and performances.*

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with you to find the perfect
items for your next
costuming project.



NICOLE SIMONE

Cover Model

Q - Can you tell me when you first became interested in modeling and when you started on your career?

A - I was introduced to the world of modeling at a very young age. My aunt and uncle have been involved in the Hawaiian Tropics beauty pageants for more than 30 years. My cousins have all been involved in the pageant/modeling scene. It wasn't until I was 17 that I went to my first model casting and was offered a contract. However the timing was bad. I

returned to the world of modeling after time spent in cubical-land, and I've been working as a plus-size freelance model for the past few years.

Q - What has been your most exciting modeling experience?

A - For more than dozen years, I'd dreamed of being a model for the illustrious San Francisco corset atelier Dark Garden, Corsetry and Couture. I'm now pleased to be featured on their website as their plus-

model. In addition, I now work with them as a special-events stylist and look forward to working there for many years to come.

The most unexpected, but exciting, experience has been the outpouring of interest from France, which has lead me to work with the magazine Vo-lUp2, as their international dance correspondent. There are lots of exciting things coming up in the future both here in the US and in France.







Q - As a working model, can you offer our readers your top three makeup tips?

A - First: Find the perfect lipstick for you, and learn to wear it with total and complete confidence. Second: Learning good makeup application technique is essential for every woman. In the world of belly dance, you essentially need two looks. A good professional face and a stage or performance face. But, you also need the ability to maximize these looks for photography. I suggest everyone visit a couple of makeup artists to learn tricks for contouring and color matching. Third: Fear not the false eyelash! It's important to find the right shape, style, length, and fullness to accentuate and enhance your eyes. Eyes are the windows to the soul, and this is one way to frame those windows in beauty.

Q - How long have you been involved in the world of belly dance?

A - I started belly dancing in the year 2000 with Azar, a high-glam American cabaret-style dancer. She was so fabulous and moved like a dream! Then I studied with Davina, who helped me bring out my inner showgirl and really pushed me to explore different styles of dance and different performance venues. During that time, I won several tournaments in the rising star category. More recently, I've studied with Crystal Silmi, a master of fusion technique with a grounding of the classic Salimpour method. When Crystal relocated to Spain, I moved my dance study to Adriana Marrelli. In the new year, I look forward to taking class with Kami Liddle, a dancer who I've looked up to for many years and am excited to study under.

Q - You've been doing some work behind the scene within the fashion world, what are your long term plans?

A - I'm really enjoying working as a photo stylist and editor. I'm honing my skills in Photoshop and InDesign looking towards a future of magazine publication. In the next few years, I'll be making capital investments in photographic equipment, and look forward to working with models and designers to create fashion spreads, catalogs and marketing materials for the web. I don't think I'll ever stop modeling or dancing, but I really love the opportunity to use my creative skills to make beautiful things, like art, magazines, and what ever the future holds.

www.Facebook.com/NicoleSimonePlusModel
Instagram: SaucySimone







Alisha Westerfeld

Photographer & Co-Author

Alisha Westerfeld, aka Zemira, and I have been schemeing up projects to work on together since the year 200! We met while working together on the board of the Bay Area chapter of MECDA, the Middle Eastern Dance Association. We were part of the team who planned and hosted a series of yearly gala shows, workshops, dance parties, and swapmeets.

Alisha and I frequently travel to events together, and she always had a camera near by. Her photos are stunning, and fortu-

nately for me, she was receptive to this amazing collaboration.

We've had such a blast taking photos of dancers, models, assiut, and events for the book. I'm so happy

to be able to share them in color in this magazine.

By the way, the year 200 is a typo I made in an infamous SF/BA MECDA flyer. We're laughing about it still!

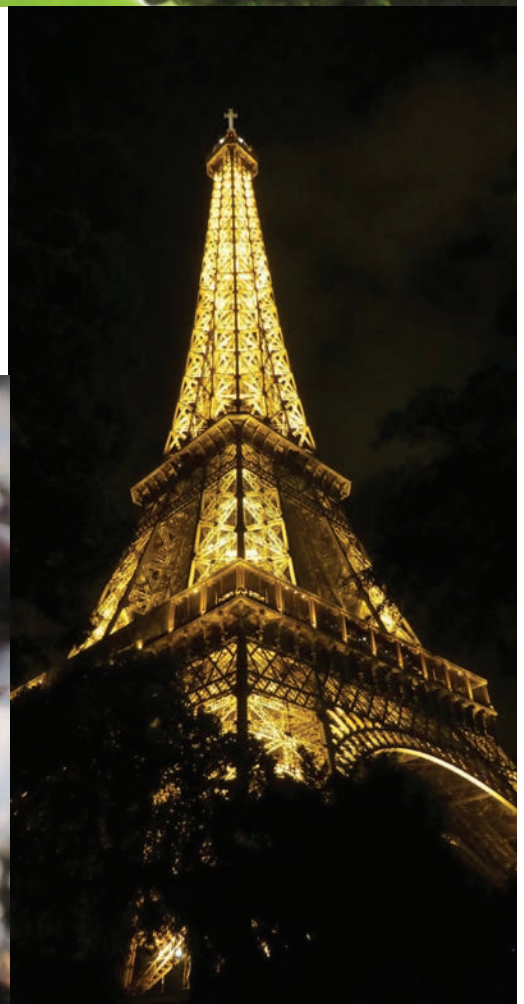


Top: Water Lilly,
TheGetty, Malibu, CA, 2011

Bottom Left: Self Portrait
Las Vegas, September 2012

Bottom Center: Snow & Berries
York, UK, December 2009

Bottom Left: Eiffle Tower
Paris 2012





Rachel
dripping in assiut

Q & A with Alisha Westerfeld

Photographer and Co-Author of *The Cloth of Egypt*

Q What are your top 3 tips for dancers preparing for a photo shoot?

A 1. Look for dancer images that you like and would like to recreate, in regard to options for posing or lighting and try to emulate them and make them yours.

2. Have energy and a positive attitude because it will work like osmosis, to the photographer and stylist and back to the model.

3. Have a list of what you are bringing to the photoshoot so you don't forget a pair of earrings or lipstick, because it can be a downer to realize that you left something at home and can put you off your game in front of the camera.

Q Who has been your favorite model during the Cloth of Egypt project?

A It's pretty impossible to pick a favorite because everyone has been so wonderful. There is one of the models I have been lucky enough to work with a lot, and that is Poppy Maya. I've really enjoyed watching her transform into so many different types and styles.



Katrina



Poppy Maya



Setareh

Q When did you meet your inner photographer?

A In high school I took a photography class as an elective as many times as I was allowed because I liked it so much. Not just because it was a class without math and exams, but also because of the instructor Mr. Robert Burrill (<http://www.rbarts.com>) and I really liked him and his passion for photography. That passion was then strengthened thanks to my parents, especially my dad who was the family photographer, when they gave me a Canon SLR camera as my high school graduation gift.

Q Who is your photography hero?

A I have always loved the amazing photographs by Ansel Adams but I don't really have a single 'hero'. Mostly I was inspired looking at the National Geographic photographs of beautiful landscapes, local and international travel & people from all over the world. It was this type of journal, with photographers from all over with no names that I can recall, that for really called to me. This is what I try to invoke when I'm traveling myself, to capture the experience small and large around me, whether I'm just

on a local day trip or overseas. I realized a few years ago that always have a camera with me, and "I'm not afraid to use it", even for every day experiences.

Q Have you got plans for building your professional photography business?

A I am looking forward to working more with Dawn Devine, but on a personal level I hope to do more traveling so I can take more photos documenting where I've been and what I've experienced.



Basinah



Shalimar



Sara

Laura Thompson

Photographer - Dancer - Jewelry Artist

Laura Thompson (aka *Sestareh*) and I are long time friends and design collaborators. Laura has participated in every phase of this project, from modelling to photography, and has even contributed in the production of the kickstarter premiums by making custom "jingers" for the bags. It's my pleasure to continue to work with such a multi-talented powerhouse!

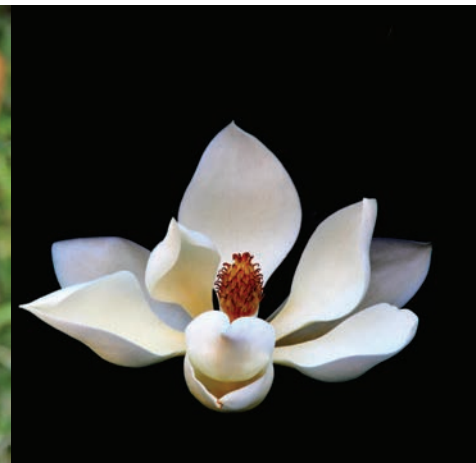
Q - When did you decide to go pro with your photography business?

A - I started selling photography notecards when photo labs began making free duplicates available when you got your film processed. I had all these extra free photographic images to be creative with, and my earliest cards were collages which I hand assembled into one-of-a-kind art pieces. Photo cards are a major part of my creative business, Beadzilla. As a result of the customer inquiry generated by the sale of my notecards, I began taking commissions for photography

projects. I currently collaborate with small business owners and other local artisans in producing images for use in advertising, portraiture, product, and event photography.

Q - Who is your biggest influence in photography?

A - My biggest influence on my photography was my grandfather. He was an accomplished amateur photographer who was ultimately published in Time-Life magazine, an amazing photo of a blonde boy in front of a Christmas tree. He enjoyed nature photography, flowers, children, and pets; themes I



focus on in much of my own work. He gave me his gift, and I treasure the opportunity to continue his legacy.

Q - Can you offer three pieces of advice for belly dancers who want to improve the quality of their images?

1 - Most important of all - know where your light source is. Without light, there can be no photography.

2 - Be honest with yourself and your photographer. Let the photographer know what your best and worst features are, and what your ultimate goals are for the images. That way, your photographer can help you achieve your goals. The photographer can best serve you

by understanding your needs. Choose adjectives to describe your goals. If you want to look strong - tell them. If you want to look coy or seductive, they can capture that moment for you.

3 - Involve an objective third person in the selection process. Putting distance between your own internal dialog about your photographic results will help you be happier with your pictures.

Q - What do you hope to hope to achieve with your photography in the next two years?

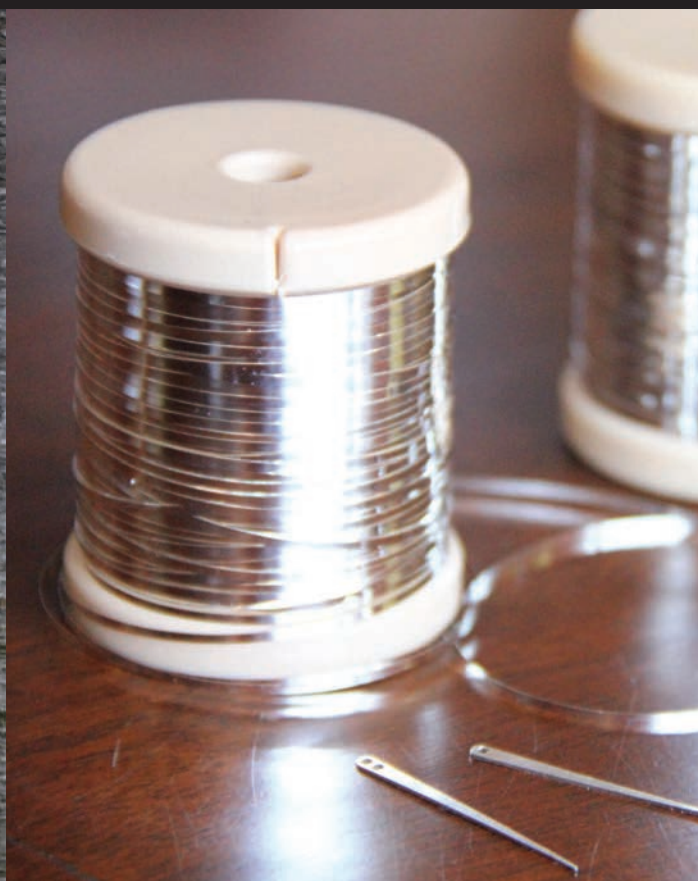
A - I'm looking forward to increasing my client base, finding new people to collaborate

with on projects that mutually benefit our growing businesses. I'm motivated and am looking forward to spending more time working on the photography side of my business.

Q - What is the other side of your business?

A - I have a trifecta of creative businesses that include photography, jewelry design, and belly dance. A day in my life is not complete without creativity, focus on health and well-being, and enjoying what each day brings. Though I have been growing my businesses for over ten years, I consider that I am really still just getting started and look forward to sharing the product of my work for years to come.





Photos by
Laura Thompson
To see more images
visit the Beadzilla
Smugmug Gallery
beadzilla.smugmug.com



Michael Baxter

Photographer

One of the best known professional belly dance photographers is the incomparable Michael Baxter. Over the past decade, he has developed a keen eye for the capturing the essence and enduring beauty of the art of belly dance. His images have appeared on the covers of CD's, DVD's, and on websites around the globe. He's booked constantly on shoots with A-List celebrity dancers at many of the most prestigious dance events. Although in hot demand accross the US and Europe, when he's at home, he's not opposed to shooting local hafla's throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.



Above: Zemira
Far Left: Celena
Left: *Setareh*
Opposite: Davina in Performance



Q - When did you discover your passion for belly dance photography?

A - On July 4, 2004, when I met professional belly dancer, video producer, and entrepreneur Michelle Joyce in the photo studio. That photo shoot changed my life, the belly dance vortex swallowed me up.

Q - Who is your photography hero?

A - I would say Harold Edgerton, who invented the strobe, or electronic flash. He was not a photographer, but the strobe radically changes how you see time, which is one of the many non-ordinary things that I've experienced in belly dance photography.

Q - Do you have three posing tips for a belly dancers?

A - First visualize in your mind how you want to appear, to set what you feel the message is of your photos, because basically you're in command of the image. Practice making facial expressions and body shapes with a mirror, video, or a friend to convey that message -- what shapes, and your mouth and eyes ... mean what you want to say about you and your dance art? Study and adapt any useful source of inspiration so that you come to the studio already prepared mind and body with looks uniquely yours, and the outcome a foreordained success: Glamorous because you are!

Q - Your work has been featured on CD and DVD covers, across the Internet, on business cards and flyers - basically everywhere! What is your proudest achievement so far?

A - I would say it's the ongoing and deepening artistic collaborations with several belly dancers and teachers in the States and Europe, lovelies that work together with me repeatedly across years. Our work is synergy between equal artists, not me as a photographer.

Q - What is next on your agenda, any upcoming projects?

A - Next month I have a remote studio shoot with two famous belly dancers on the East Coast produced by Amy Smith of Belly Dance New England, and this project will be truly epic.





Davina by Michael Baxter
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, 2012





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Animals and Assiut



I am owned by an old grumpy kitty named Sassy. She's a keen observer of my activities, and is always looking for an opportunity to dive into my projects. But it seems that no matter where I go, there's always a playful pet ready to photobomb! Call it cute, call it crazy, costumers love their pets.



Five Essential Shopping Tips for Buying Vintage Assiut

Prices, conditions and availability of vintage and antique assiut vary wildly and are always in a state of flux. The key to getting the best deal is to be as prepared and knowledgeable as possible.

1 - Establish a Budget. Nothing is worse than seeing the “perfect piece” of assuit, buying it, and then being resentful of the cost. Before you go shopping for assiut, look at your funds and set a price cap. The antique market varies radically, and the same quality piece can sell low or high. Be realistic! This is vintage cloth, and the days of \$10 deals from unaware dealers are a thing of the past. Visit auction and sales sites such as eBay, Etsy, and Ruby Lane to see what the current price range is to set a realistic budget for yourself. And remember, try to resist the urge to get caught up in the thrill of a hot auction. Having a budget will help you stay focused and realistic.

2 - Know What You Want. Do you want a museum quality piece to treasure? Are you looking for a vintage piece in good condition to use and wear? Do you have plans for cutting apart a piece for a costume? Is the color important? Before you seriously begin shopping, having an idea of both what you want and what you don't want. This will help you hone your searches both in person and on the web.

2 - Do the Research. Assiut comes in different shapes and sizes, colors and qualities. There are always a few assiut shawls, robes, and garments available, but they are becoming increasingly rare. It's important, especially when shopping on the web, to learn to discern the differences between modern, vintage, and antique assiut in pictures. Not everything marked vintage is, so buyer beware. There are numerous spellings and names for assiut, so be sure to build the most effective search terms possible.

4 - Be Prepared to Wait. This is an axiom of the world of antiques. There is always another assiut shawl available for sale somewhere. Although antique assiut is becoming increasingly rare, there are always new pieces emerging from collections, so even if you lose out on an auction today, there will be another opportunity in the future.

5 - Don't Be Afraid to Negotiate. No matter if you are shopping in person or online, don't be afraid to negotiate with a dealer on the price. In some instances, the seller may not realize what they have, and you can point out flaws such as holes, splits, and discolored patches. This is one place where your research will pay off by knowing what is a fair price for the moment, and haggling accordingly.



Shopping on Etsy

If you are looking for interesting accessories, original designs, and vintage textiles, Etsy is a great place to search. My top tip is the same as for auction sites and the internet in general, use all of your favorite search terms. When you find designers and suppliers that carry the merchandise you prefer, like their stores. If you don't see what you are looking for immediately, reach out and let the designers know what you desire. Open a dialog and get onto their mailing lists, so you can follow their work, and perhaps the perfect item will appear right before your eyes.



One of the important benefits of the Etsy shopping experience, is the ability for a seamstress or costume designer to create two

different kinds of shopping experiences. The first, is a digital store front for ready-made costumes and accessories. The second is that Etsy also allows designers to craft custom options for people interested in collaborating on a design, or who require a specific size or materials.

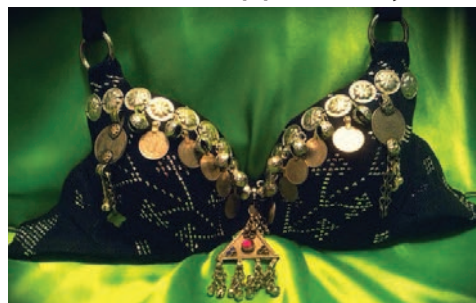
Another feature of Etsy is the ability to sell vintage cloth, clothing, and supplies. This makes Etsy another option for buying vintage and modern assiut cloth.



Jillian at The Verdant Muse is a great example of a designer making unique one-of-a-kind wearable art

pieces. She integrates assiut cloth into many of her designs, and she uses Etsy as both an opportunity to sell ready-made pieces, but also her store serves as a portfolio for ordering custom-made pieces. <https://www.etsy.com/shop/theverdantmuse>

Bellatrix Ali of Belliphat specializes in assiut bras and accessories made from assiut for dancers of every size and shape. Like many designers, she features a mix of ready-to-wear and the opportunity for



custom designs. <https://www.etsy.com/shop/BelliPhat>

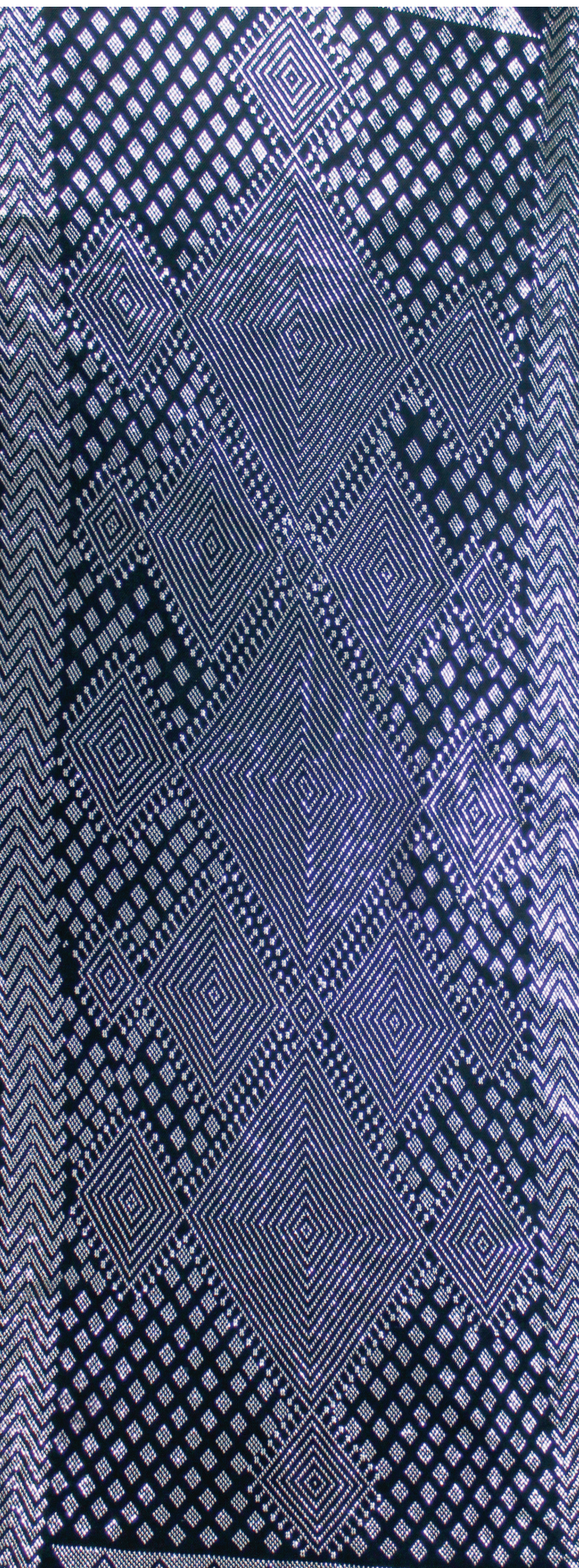
Vaudville Gypsy is one costume and jewelry designer who adores working with vintage assiut pieces when she has the opportunity. In her store, you can often see examples of vintage assiut garments restored, re-designed, and remade for use in today's world. www.etsy.com/shop/VaudevilleGypsy



Hilary's Bazaar has been one of the key suppliers of vintage assiut pieces I use as examples for construction and repair in The Cloth of Egypt. She sells vintage assiut as full panels, made into costume accessories, and as smaller pieces.

In addition she carries vintage beads, jewelry supplies, pendants and more delicious embellishments. www.etsy.com/shop/HilarysBazaar





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Smart Searching

The key to hunting down the perfect assiut panel, scrap, garment or accessory, is knowing the lingo. I've found more than 50 different spellings and terms used to describe this cloth. When searching use the most variations for the widest results. Let the search begin!

v x k f g e k t e l l i f q n
m z n y f t x s b f t x j w s
z g i i u i o j u u b b s f i
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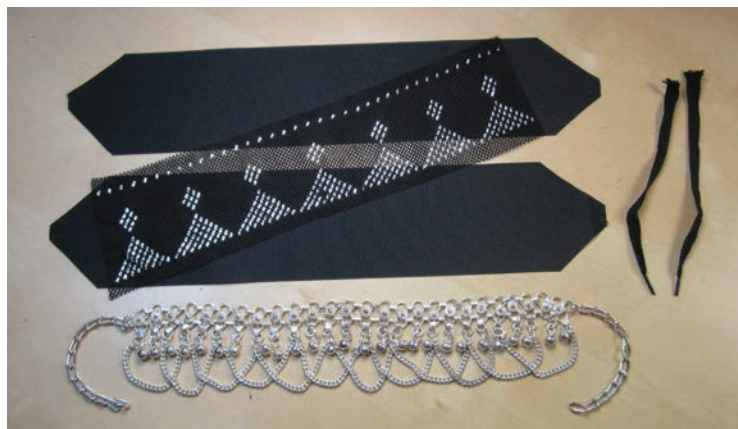
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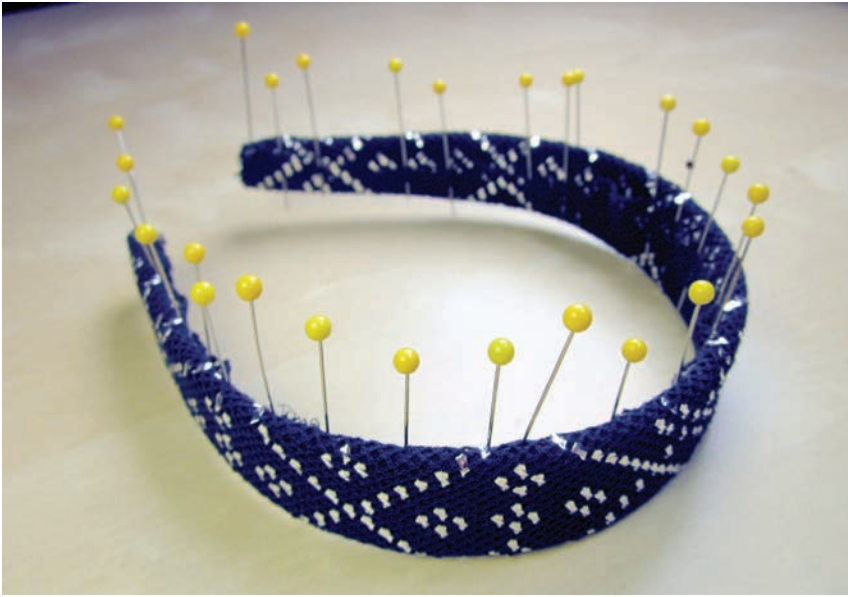
siout
siut
Tally
Telli
Tulle bi Telli
zoot

Tie-On Headband

If you have a strip of extra assiut left over from a costuming project, why not make a coordinating headband? There are many ways to make a headband, but this one is quick and easy. Simply take two layers of black ribbon and applique your assiut onto it. In this example I used grosgrain ribbon for the base and a repurposed shoelace cut in half and stitched to the end. I further embellished with an inexpensive anklet. Here model Redvelvet pairs it with an assiut triangle, pinning the two pieces together with pearl-tipped corsage pins.



SCRAPTASTIC



Make a custom assiut headband with a discount store plastic headband. Simply wrap it like a package, pin into place and hand sew. Here's a headband ready for stitching. I call this the "porcupine" stage of the project.



Hair Flowers are a versatile way to use up even the smallest assiut scraps. There are a myriad ways to integrate them, as either a single accent, or as the main body of the piece.

Turn a casual bag into an elegant accessory with the addition of an assiut applique. Here, a store bought bag (Target - 14.99) is embellished with a rectangle of assiut. Minimal investment makes maximum impact.



Dressing the Part

Modern assiut isn't just for costuming!

Why not make a kicky little dress to wear to your favorite dance event? Here are two easy-to-sew dresses which are made even more glamorous with the addition of assiut.

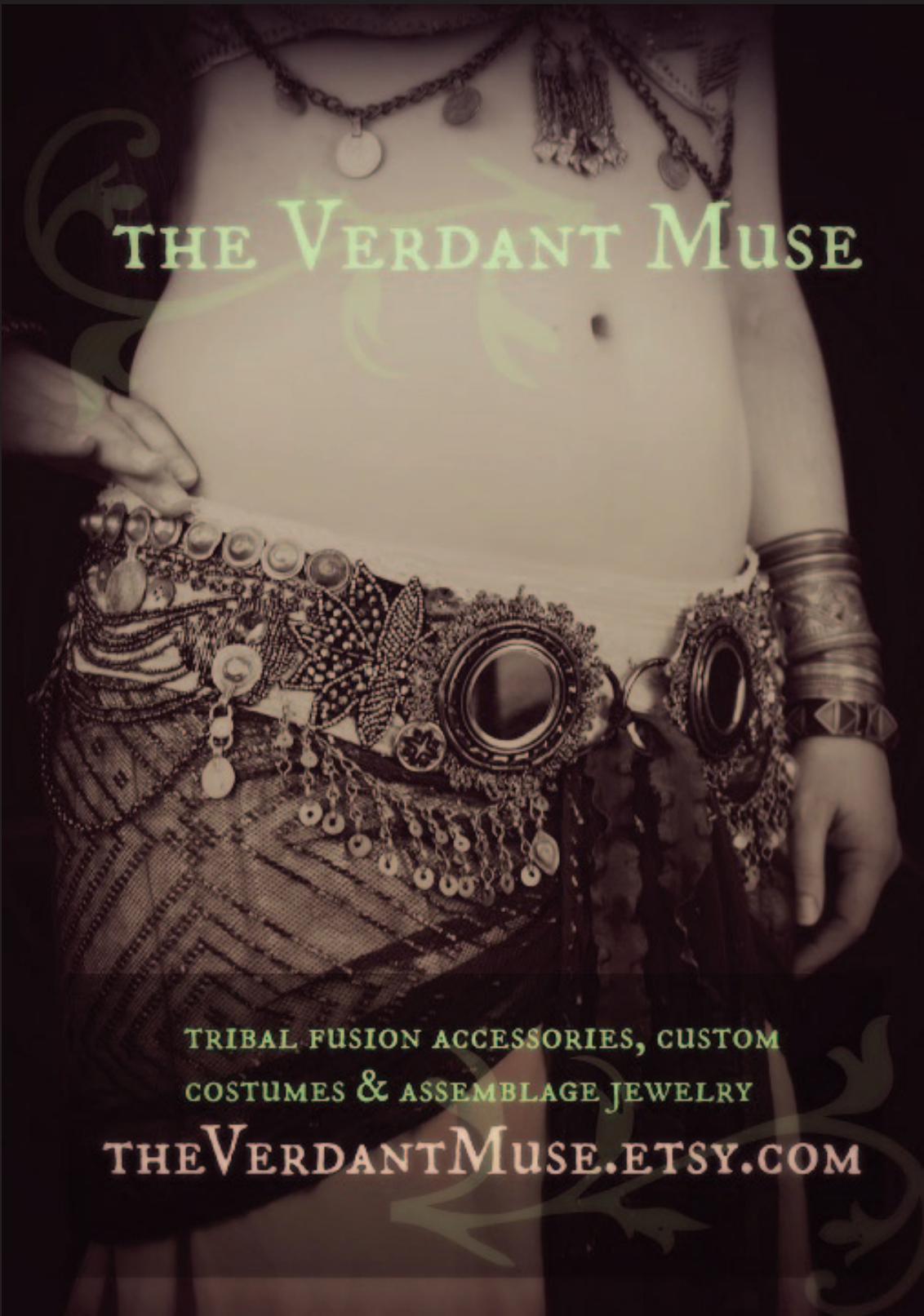
On the left, redvelvet is wearing a simple "two tube" dress with an empire bodice. The directions for this fun little dress are available in the book, "The Cloth of Egypt." by Dawn Devine ~ Davina.

On the right, Poppy Maya is wearing a simple swing dress made from a an affordable commercial pattern, Simplicity's "It's So Easy" #2120.

Far right, Nicole Simone wears a tabard of assiut over a simple black dress. The assiut is hand tacked onto the neck and sleeves and held in place at the waist with a dramatic belt.







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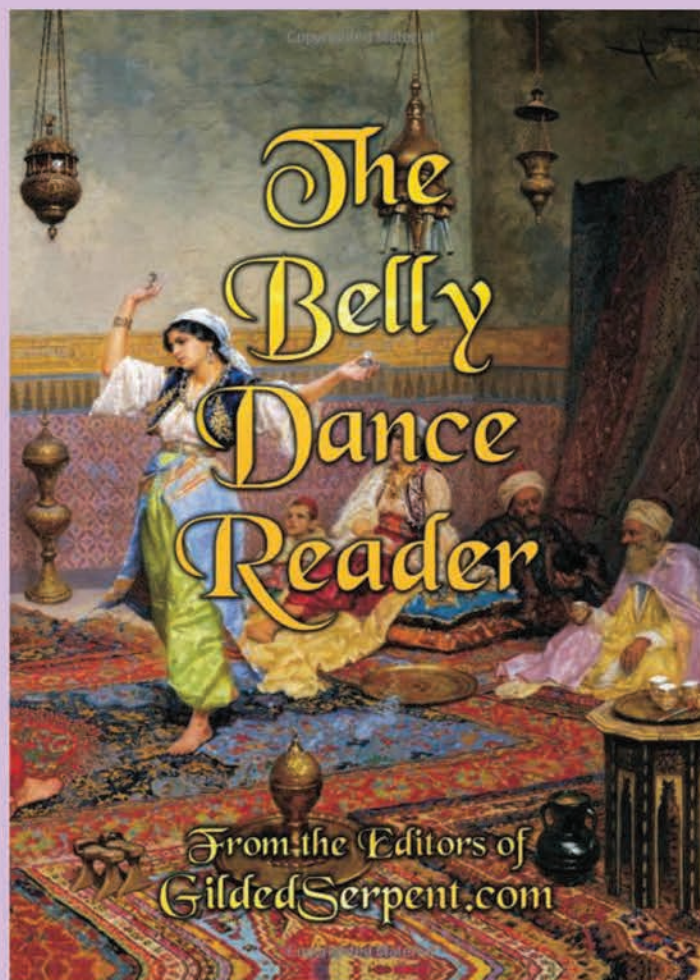
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From the Editors of the
Gilded Serpent eZine

The Belly Dance Reader

The Belly Dance Reader is an anthology of essays from many of the leaders in our Middle Eastern music and dance community. The contributors range from PhD scholars to hobbyists. This book is illustrated with hundreds of photos and artwork from current to vintage, including various sub-styles of the dance, gathered from around the world. Subjects covered include: An introduction, dancing at various ages and stages, history, costuming and appearance, regional and sub styles of the dance, theory and technique, as well as valuable resources such as Arabic scales and rhythms, glossary, maps and more.

www.gildedserpent.com/reader



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Lacis Museum of Lace and Textiles

Berkeley, CA

Perhaps one of the best collections of assuit in the US is located in Berkeley and is accessible by appointment. The shop had examples from their permanent collection on exhibit throughout 2012-2013. Although the exhibit is over, you can still visit their website and view a slide show of their pieces.

lacismuseum.org/exhibit/Asuit/SlideShow



Private Collections

Some of the best private collections of assiut are located in the San Francisco Bay Area. Assiut cloth has played a key role in the history of belly dance in this region. Celebrated performers such as Jamila Salimpour, John Compton, Najia, and Hanan of Liquid Silver Designs shaped the taste and style of the area.

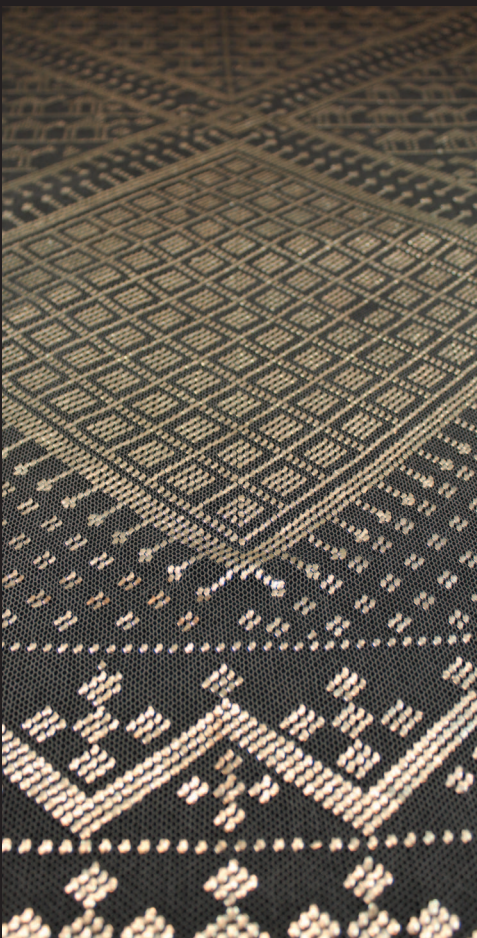
On the next few pages are images from collectors who opened their collections to share their treasures with us. Rather than wax poetically about their tastes in collecting antique, vintage, and modern assiut, I want to let their pieces speak for themselves.



Collection of Hasna

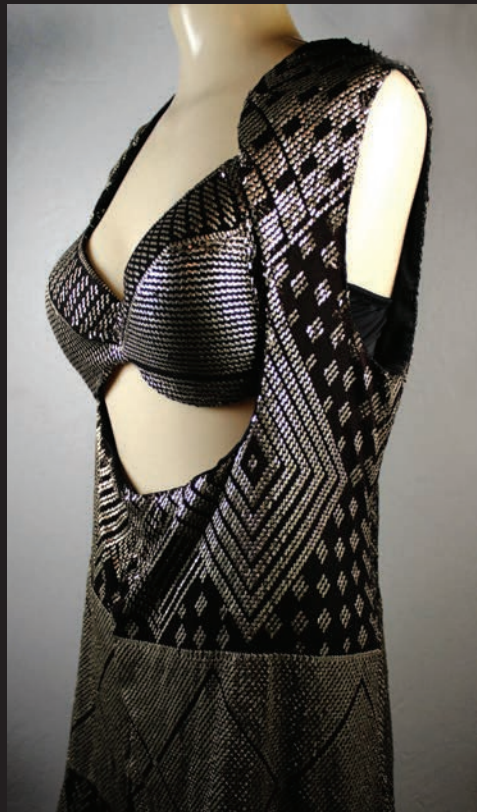


Ojala Collection





Sindaiya Collection





Gaditana Collection







Lunatic Fringe Dance Ensemble

*I would like to thank all of my friends for helping me out by donating their time and energy to my project. They took time out of their busy schedules for meetings, fittings, and photo shoots. Without the help of my family, friends, and co-conspirators, I could not have accomplished my goals for making my book, *The Cloth of Egypt: All About Assiut*, a reality.*

Thank you so very much! Dawn Devine - Davina



Paloma



Rayah



Saffyah



Rawiyah



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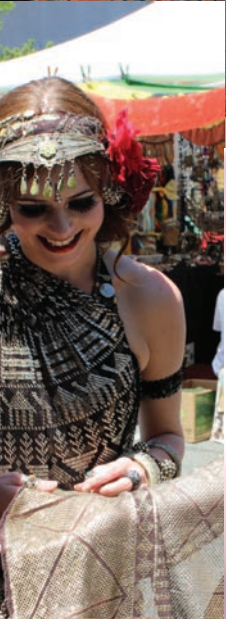
WALDO

There are some pieces of assiut that are dramatic, exotic, and luscious. The kind of piece that makes everyone stop for a moment, just to stare at it. “Waldo” is not one of those pieces. Instead, this beautifully executed narrow scarf has proven to be one of the most useful and versatile elements in my assiut wardrobe. Because Waldo came into my life at the beginning of the photography stage of the book project, he’s appeared on numerous models. No matter if he’s wrapped around a head, draped around a neck, or tied around a bottom, Waldo slides effortlessly into every costuming challenge. I would like to send out a special thanks to my dear friend Jamie Hanrahan who gave me Waldo.









The Big Kahuna

Affectionately known as "The Big Kahuna," my antique assiut piano shawl and I have spent the year attending events, workshops, and dance parties. I love to have folks play with it, draping it, feeling the weight and drape of such a luxurious piece. I owe a special thanks to good friend Nancy Hay, who found it and bought it on my behalf. Outdoor shots of The Big Kahuna were taken at Tribal Fest 2013 by Dawn Devine and Alisha Westerfeld.

LAUGHING BEHIND THE SCENES

I've gotten quite the reputation as a slave driver while working on this project. Here is PROOF that the models have (for the most part) enjoyed their part in this glorious collaboration. What was the most difficult part of picking photos for this spread? There are so many photos of people laughing to choose from!







COLOR POP







lago